

DNREC's Division of Parks & Recreation Announces Plan to Manage Cap Put On Sale of Delaware Surf Fishing Permits

DOVER – DNREC's Division of Parks & Recreation announced today its plan for managing the cap of 17,000 Delaware surf-fishing permits as voted on this year by the division's advisory council. With the cap figure approaching – as of June 7, 15,000 surf-fishing permits had been sold – the Division of Parks & Recreation has reduced the number of locations where the permits can be purchased, transferred or replaced.

Surf-fishing permit sales locations include:

- Bellevue State Park office, 800 Carr Road, Wilmington, DE 19809
- Cape Henlopen State Park office, 15099 Cape Henlopen Drive, Lewes, DE 19958
- The Indian River Life-Saving Station store at Delaware Seashore State Park, 25039 Coastal Highway, Rehoboth Beach, DE 19971
- DNREC's Division of Fish & Wildlife sales desk at the Richardson & Robbins Building, 89 Kings Highway, Dover, DE 19901.

Surf-fishing permits will be sold at these locations until the 17,000 cap is reached, at which point 2019 permit sales will end. The Division of Parks & Recreation notes that there are no restrictions for non-vehicle, walk-on fishing, as long as an angler has a Delaware fishing license issued by DNREC's Division of Fish & Wildlife.

In January, Delaware's Parks & Recreation Advisory Council, an 11-member board appointed by the Governor that advises DNREC's

Division of Parks & Recreation, voted to limit the number of permits issued annually to no more than 17,000, and to raise surf fishing permit fees. Both decisions were made at a regularly-scheduled council meeting Jan. 17, at which the council received written and oral comments from more than 100 members of the public.

The Division of Parks & Recreation statistics show that the issuing of surf-fishing permits has increased at a rate of seven percent annually from 2011 to 2017. The Division implemented a first-come, first-served cap on the number of permits issued as the most equitable way to serve all beach users, to manage a limited resource, and to protect against overcrowding of parks beaches. The Division also has found that limiting the number of permits enables more efficient management of the state's surf-fishing program. This plan also aligns with DNREC's priority to ensure a safe and enjoyable experience for all visitors to Delaware's award-winning state parks system.

At the January meeting, DNREC's Division of Parks & Recreation reported a three-fold increase over the last year for violations of the "actively-engaged in surf fishing" rule enforced by DNREC Natural Resources Police Park Rangers. In response, the Division of Parks & Recreation has added a new, full-time Delaware Natural Resources Police park ranger for the coastal region, and has expanded rangers' workweeks from 37.5 to 40 hours, creating 1,000 hours of additional coverage annually for the coastal parks. The "actively-engaged" rule continues to be a priority area for targeted enforcement.

Sixty-five percent of the funds used to operate and maintain DNREC's Delaware State Parks come from the collection of user fees. Revenue generated by the new fee increase has advanced the Division of Parks & Recreation's capacity to increase enforcement efforts, improve amenities and better educate park visitors on the state's multi-use beaches.

Surf-fishing permit holders continue to receive the benefit of their permit serving as an annual parks pass, providing access to all 17 of DNREC's Delaware's state parks. The reduction in sales locations is only limited to surf-fishing permits. Annual Passes are still available for purchase at 19 sales locations throughout the state parks system, and also can be purchased through sales agents and online.

More information on the surf fishing cap is available at <https://www.destateparks.com/Adventures/Fishing> or call 302-739-9200.

Contact: Beth Shockley, DNREC Public Affairs, 302-739-9902

Vol. 49, No. 154